

Surrealistic metaphysics, lyric abstraction and artistic identity of Gjelosh Gjokaj as a universal figurative value

PhD (C.) Shpresa Tolaj-Gjonbalaj
Albanian Studies Centre, Tirana

Abstract

This theme goes aside with lineament of the artistic personality of world measures of Gjelosh Gjokaj. He is known as the emblem of modern graphic of Kosovo. He was the artist who was acknowledge for his authenticity and artistic credibility. He was one of the first founding stones of the branch of Graphics at the High Pedagogical School in Prishtina. He was also a member of Honour of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo, as well as a distinguished painter and graphist. Gjelosh Gjokaj is characterized by the free modernist figurative expression, artistic identity, intellect and encyclopedic knowledge, all these virtues that lead to the upstream of the Albanian all over the world.

He chose to delineate the synthesis among the traditional and the archaic, interwoven with the symbolism of surrealism, metaphysics of the lyric abstraction, in his creative opus throughout all its creative phases. So, the artist, who feels like missing his homeland, and who also feels and suffers the tragic destiny of the Nation, through his original artistic expression testified to the world his ethnic Biography.

This biography, treated with exceptional authenticity, was evaluated from the world art scholars. The encouragement from these scholars was the constant impulse for Gjokaj, who devotedly, seriously and committed made him bring paint works of high artistic level, keeping always the same path started since his childhood.

Aim:

Thematic analysis of Gjokaj composition aims to offer an analytical observation upon the artistic path of the artist himself, who grew up fiercely in the high levels of European paintings, and why not, worldwide levels as well. Although his name was known in the metropolises of the western art, being grateful with the honor he made to his nation, we owe him to continuously treat the Gjokaj artistic phenomenon and transmit his traces to the younger generation.

Methodology:

During the research there were implemented the standard scientific research methods. The article is based in primary and secondary sources, monograph, newspaper articles, TV programs, direct analysis of the artist's activity, as well as a bundle of other materials.

Results:

This article brings to light artist's maximum achievements of world size, which successfully and courageously trod in the path of international art. Because of this, Gjokaj might be an influencer in the stroll of new artists in the world.

Conclusion:

This thematic tends to treat the promotion of confirmed values of the artist, who in a dignified way, with high consideration and much respect, made known to the world the name of the Albanian. Being one of the first artists who cultivated the contemporary art in Kosovo, as a member of the Pleiades of the golden generation of figurative artists in Kosovo, as well as trying to improve the artistic expression in a chronological way (in Kosovo, but even in the Western countries where he spent most of his lifetime) his name in the contemporary Albanian as well as world art was eternized with golden letters.

Keywords: Gjokaj, metaphysics, abstraction, authenticity, nation, international etc.

Introduction

Gjelosh Gjokaj, a name which honours the Nation and the Country. In my own migrations it is easily noted the typical and decisive turn in the aesthetic formal metamorphosis. The starting point of any creation concept is on by his own spiritual concussion, which happens in the way of inspiration with any specific content, when the subtler ties of the artist sense of soul tremble, which turn into a pure and harmonic language. It is here where the artistic recreation play starts, which I would like to bring out to perfection, having in mind to avoid the empty beauty, because any excessive ornament harms the aesthetic value of the work (Foniqi, 2003, 21).

Gjelosh Gjokaj, a synonym of the Nation and Fatherland, through free figurative expression shows his artistic identity, his intellect and encyclopedic knowledge, bringing the Albanian name up all over the world. So, the artist who broke the barriers and stood up to the Olympus(Foniqi, 2003,17), it is known as an emblem of the modernist graphic in Kosovo. He is acknowledged for his artistic authenticity and credibility. He was distinguished as the founding stone of the branch of Graphics at the High Pedagogical School in Pristina. He was also a member of Honour of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo, as well as a distinguished painter and graphist.

Everlasting migrant

He started his migration since he was a little child, when broken hearted left behind Milesh of Tuz, his village of birth, so that to travel towards Zmajevu (Vojvodina) in year 1946, where his father and elder brother had previously been settled there. Nonetheless, as a pupil of Arts School of Novi Sad, he soon understood the difficulties being based on national discrimination. And it is exactly these obstacles which revolted him and urged him to follow his second year (1953) at the School of Art crafts in Peja(School archive), where the following two years were full of excellent results, so that in the last and fourth year, he comes back again in Arts School of Novi Sad. From there, in year1958 (Kqiku, 2011,147) he attends the college in the Academy of Figurative Arts in Belgrade, and finishes them in 1963 being a student of Prof. Boshko Karanoviq (Arti Bashkëkohor i Kosoves, 1986,178). At that time there were maximal efforts so that the Direction of Figurative Art could be constituted at the High Pedagogical School of Prishtina, Gjelosh, with the invitation of Muslim, previously known by him during their studies at the Academy of Arts in Belgrade, comes together to the group of eminent artists of Kosovo, so that they could found the professional basis of Figurative Arts in Kosovo (Kqiku, 2011, 149).

Later on, during the years 1964-1969 we find him as a lecturer of this high education institution, opening new perspectives for the early artists. He was one of the lecturers who left outstanding traces as a man as well as a maestro (Kqiku, 2011,90/92)._

The show of the artistic invention – his life mission

Due to his artistic courage, he soon chose the communication with the audience. After the expositions in Novi Sad, Baçki and Petrovac (Kqiku, 2011,143), as a student of the School of Arts during the years 1959-1967, as he was exploring his artistic identity in

his first phase of creativity, Gjeloš managed to set up a series of expositions. He started with Pristina (1959), continuing with Bor (1960), Zaječar (1961) (Arti Bashkëkohor i Kosoves, 1986,12), so that to continue later his path towards Belgrade, Prizren and Novi Sad, not leaving behind Budva, Kotor and Bar.

This decade of artistic vocation of Gjokaj, initially includes the traditional with the archaic, later on to be oriented towards symbolism and surrealism. Gjokaj called his creative opus 'The experimental phase' (Hysaj, 2003,177), which he created after his academic studies in Kosovo, meanwhile he was exploring his artistic identity. The tragedy and misery found in the compositional space of the tableau of Gjokaj are features of this phase of the author. He is also concerned about the fatherland, the pain and love for it.

The tragic fate of the nation and the efforts of the occupiers in line was for an uprooting of Albanians from their ethnic lands, as well as the colonization of the area with Slavic population.

Army and military storms of the Slavic regime, deriving from a series of elaborative Serbian and Montenegrin forces drafted throughout the years, due to which they submitted terror and genocide, massive slaughter, persecution, violent banishment to the autochthonous population (so that they could send them to exile from their ancestors' land), were some open wounds that lived inside Gjeloš as an artist. It is also true that outstanding traces inside his soul were even from the Second World War, which he experienced when he was a child, being himself wounded from a bomb (Kelmendi, 1983).

The bombs, collective drama, killing people, dead animals and other evocations, as testimony of which he has himself been, made that his works be invaded by the horrendous past.

As a reflection of his spiritual concerns that coexist with the artist, he brings the nailed heads, big headed portraits, tears dropping from the weight of missing pain, mutilated figures, and other elements standing upon the gloomy and clear compositional background.

His tableau is prescribed by the sign and symbol language, as well as the philosophical content, realized according to the synthetic symbolism.

So, in general the graphics of the first phase reflect shocking testimonies from the past. Through his artistic language he touches the enjoyments and the moments of childhood, keeping as a sacred reliquary of the memory, the moment when he left his place of origin. Love and blue-feeling for his motherland is expressed extensively in all his interviews even from Gjokaj himself.

This sensation is situated, undoubtedly, even in the conversation between Gjeloš and Malush Mrasori in the note *"Kujtimet me njeriun e thjeshtë dhe artistin e madh"* (Memories with the simple man and great artist): *"I love that land and I like living there, because there are my roots, those roots, deep and fragile that link the man to the land, where his ancestors were born and dead, definitively the air of Malësi doesn't resemble to any other air at all. It has something special that lifts you up, it excites, it makes you drunk, it gives you a weird feeling to walk on foot and to be at the same time something else"* (Mrasori, 2011,67). In this context, the Academic Rexhep Ferri, reminds his conversation with Gjeloš, who has once confessed him about the pain he felt for the abandoned lands of his

homeland.

"I don't want to hide, to forget my childhood. Malin e Thatë, the white stone. This fist inspires me." His friend Rexhep browses the emotions of the artist, whose graphics he calls them valuable, the dimension that the young generation of the Albanian graphics has not overcome yet. According to him, in those graphics there were journeys and dreams, as well (Ferri, 2003,38).

"In the silk road, the future profile overcomes all the predictions. Gjelosh, even as a painter, started to live his own life and not that of the others." So as to refresh the memory, he opened a new page. The century, that has been muted for a long time has come out on the scene. For another time, it is spread through the legends. Before or after a dream Gjelosh finds what he has been looking for" (Ferri, 2003, 39). Academic Rexhep Ferri stresses out among other things, on the occasion of the personal exposition of Gjokaj in year 2000 in Pristina, which was organized in the Gallery of Arts of Kosovo.

His artistic realizations of this decade were impressive not only in Kosovo, but throughout ex Yugoslavia as well. For the impressions of the first encounter with the graphic reproductions of Gjelosh Gjokaj published in the journal *"Jeta e re"*, the Academic Mehmet Kraja writes:

"There were gloomy images of the heads which were formed by dense harmonic lines, that were "bent" towards the meditative and emotional essences, always uncovering the deepest hidden parts of the individual and collective tragic, unique and universal at the same time." For Kraja, Gjelosh remains only an attentive seeker of the expression as functional as possible of those early deep cravings that have been observed at the origin of the origin (Kraja, 2005).

The surrealist way is the initial form of the structuring of the painting to which Gjokaj felt at ease for the reformation of the imaginary memories (Varvarica-Kuka, 2014, 22).

In the sequences of this period, along with the obliged and ordered paintings from themes of imagination, it started to sprout out the painting of the reflection of predicted visions, upon which would be painted further abstractions of geometric figurations, abstractions of rational metaphysics, lyrics as well as abstract abstractions, always held on the theme of the contemporary man. This method of painting was concretized with the painting of geometric figures and it was spread even in the second phase of his for a while (Varvarica-Kuka, 2014, 26).

Rome and the surrealist metaphysics

Gjelosh Gjokaj in the seventh decade of the twentieth century dared to step on the international figurative scene, coming up the tops of the world art. After a huge sacrifice of his abandonment from the homeland, having a stop in Rome, he invaded some prestigious museums and galleries around the world. Although in the creative opus of Gjokaj the Albanian spirit could be felt, through his artistic credo, in his whole contemporary inspiration, he continued our collective biography. It is exactly this biography, the reminiscence through strata in sub conscience, the tragic hooked in pain, craving and pride, are interwoven together in duality in his works.

The impulsive artist, successor of the modern postmodernism (Varvarica-Kuka, 2014,14), as

the Arts scholar Suzana Varvarica - Kuka calls him, artistic events, experienced and heard are skillfully transformed and sculpted. "Gjokaj has shown the same figurative sincerity as well as conceptual consistency so that to magnificently translate the fantasy of his memory, in imaginary harmony with the European modernism or postmodernism. He made us known his figurative culture, all of it being of Gjelosh, since its very first beginnings" (Varvarica-Kuka, 2014,15), points out the scholar.

As Dr. Elizabeth Emmerich, on the occasion of the artist's exposition in the Gallery "Atelier" in Augsburg, Germany, writes that: *He has entered even deeper in the objects of his paintings, and thus he reflected in a convicted way their structures. He considers in a detailed way the forms structured within each other and the colours that seem like fragments from a great whole, although they still construct a unit being isolated* (Emmerich, 2011, 51). Gjelosh was lucky when in Rome met the great National activists Martin Camaj and Ernest Koliq, as well as genius painter Ibrahim Kodra (Kqiku, 2011,152/153).

In an interview conducted by Naime Beqiraj, in the article *"With a sack of inspirations from the homeland"*, among other things he claims that in 1970 (Beqiraj, 2011,102), at the "La Rasegna" Gallery in Rome (Kqiku, 2011,113), he has opened the first personal exhibition, where Ernest Koliqi (Beqiraj, 2011,102), who called him an Erudite, a phenomenon and a personality who impressed with his appearance (Nura,1996, Bujku), kept the opening speech. He also tells how he met with Picasso in 1972, then with Renato Guttoso who at that time had communist political beliefs (Beqiraj, 2011, 102).

Gjokaj while unfolding his international journey, in almost all interviews speaks about the artistic experience in Italy, the influence that Renaissance paintings have had on him, and the influence of other masterpieces in Italy; not excluding young generations of contemporary art, such as Paul Morand, Gino Severini, Giorgio de Chirico, and others, considered as a group of artists of genius artistic values, after the period of realism and romanticism.

But despite the admiration that the author expresses towards De Chirico, his art is completely independent, without imitations and influences, completely unique and authentic. This is confirmed by the art scholar Mustafa Ferizi, according to whom *the works realized in the metaphysical spirit are the ones that best justify the great creative identity of Gjelosh Gjokaj, who prove that he is a sensible artist, thinker and poet.*

His metaphysics is not like that of De Chirico, with antique effigies and architecture, that are empty and lifeless, but it is made up of the colorful landscapes of the painter's countryside by the unspoiled mountaineers, these two-foot rocks, as our poet Migjeni would have called them (Ferizi, 2003,66) concludes Ferizi.

It is perfectly clear that Italy embraced him from the beginning. The art metropolis gave to him the freedom of expression, as well as the full action space in his creativity.

Though young in Rome and being eager to affirm his art, built with aesthetic prosperity, he was ranked among other avant-garde artists; this resulted necessarily in drawing the attention of the Italian artistic elite. In this context, even the critic of art Dario Micacchi while handling his creative vocation, considering Gjeloshi as a "Fictional Lyricist", concludes that the artist in Italy is developing as a real protagonist of artistic events.

"Gjokaj, in art and culture, where the consumers' society dominates, introduces the rural

childhood, which seems to be identified with the historical childhood of the imagination itself." Dario also emphasizes that the Painter through his own art brings the cold rage of a man and of people he does not forget, whose memory is created by the present (Mikaki,1979).

He does not forget to mention the artistic spirit that is applied by Maestro Gjokaj. "Essentially, the artist ranges in two types of images. In the first, visionary and neo-metaphysical interiorly and externally, discovering what the violent past had left, while in the second image, he is presented as a more organic rather than metaphysical visionary, but in a kind of anxious lecture of anatomy made with the signs of a body that is tortured or drowned, or almost of a broken head" (Mikaki/1979, 2003, 82).

On Gjelosh's figurative language, on his lyrical fantasy, on his surrealism and metaphysics, critics such as Milan Milovic and Jovanka Vujačić have expressed, by chronologically reflecting the artist's achievements over the years that: "Gjokaj trying to humanize the situation without hope or despair, the alienation of the contemporary man, trying to meditate with a universal figurative language about uncertainty, or about the ambiguity of life and destiny, uses the optimal possibilities of the figurative language and manifests the self-perceiving reality through lyrical fantasy intertwined with surrealism and metaphysics (Maroviq& Vujaçiq, 2003,100).

And "the cross city", as Gjeloshi names Rome, where many roads are broken and cut, with many directions and researches (Sefaj, 2003,111), gives impulses to the outline of the industrialized robotic life, divided into thousands of pieces and in many directions at the same time, trying to collect the particles and to face the vital dynamics (Sefaj, 2003,111).

It is the creative imagination and intuition that leads to surreal and metaphysical artistic accomplishments, with enduring and indisputable values.

Undoubtedly Rome intrigues to reflect the man, his world of controversies and countless things. There Gjeloshi creates the cycle "Robots", in which man as a subject has the color of the metal, the color of the stone, the structure of the tin.

Metaphorically designed and grotesque, Gjelosh's metallic man goes somewhere unintentionally, purposeless, headless and limbed, accompanied by Wagner's music (Ferizi, 2003,66).

Mechanized robotized figures outline the creativity of Gjelosh during the 1970s and 1980s.

On the art of Gjelosh, Renato Guttuso, in his letter to Gjokaj, states: "In your images, with a lot of experience, I see the expression of a form in which the magic of childhood can be found. Personality and popular myths are rooted in the wisdom of simple images. A crying mother, the human head with full reflection of experience and exclusion" (Guttuso, 2011,41).

While the famous Italian critic Lorenca Truchi in 1977, when Gjeloshi held the last personal exhibition in Rome, at the most renowned "Tonineli" Gallery, writes "Finally, a very serious exhibition in Rome" (Truku/1977, 2003, 112). The title itself attests to the importance of the works of Gjokaj in contemporary international art. During his stay in Italy, Gjeloshi realized in a symbolic, metaphysical, figurative and poetic spirit, artistic cycles, such as: Nailed heads, Birds, Robotized metal people.

Among them, there is without doubt the painting "Exodus", which reveals the relocation and biblical exodus of the Albanians during the centuries. By 1978, thanks

to the artistic content, authenticity, creativity and philosophical values, the present work made Gjelosh Gjokaj to be honored as the artist of the year for the work that represents man and his reality in bizarre configurations (Bachmeier/2003, 2011,43). Gjelosh's compositional complexity (cut heads, limbs, figures, nails, as well as the color of the stone, the color of the ash, the color of Cen river, the metaphysical atmosphere prevailing on his paintings), from Rome, took over in different places of Italy. A lot of Exhibitions were organized in the different galleries and museums of Rome, Milan, Trento, also in Zagreb in New York, and elsewhere.

The lyrical abstraction of Gjelosh Gjokaj

The last stage of creativity – The Lyrical Abstraction, began in the city of Augsburg, Germany since 1983.

Encouraged by the dreams and the sensational imagination, Gjeloshi after being settled in this city, realized his creative opus precisely in the spirit of abstraction.

The artist who does not set limits on creativity, prefers to explore in continuity. So, not by chance, he chose to experiment and develop his further creativity, through this form of artistic communication.

This is also confirmed by the author himself. According to him, each stage takes its place. *"I do not want to be a slave to a single painting expression. I found this way and this expression and I'm ending this way. I consider the painting as a pleasure and not just as a phenomenon to be developed."* (Nura,1996, Bujku).

Gjeloshi, fluctuating between color harmony and contrast, impressive and expressive expression, sublime dynamics, brings conspicuous and highly original compositions. Looking at excellence through abstract, ideal and successful forms, he creates variations of abstraction, including the philosophical dimension of contemporary art. And that form of art too, thanks to the mastery of the artist, was very productive.

"I wanted to go away from craft, because the craft then becomes stronger and it becomes less art. I consider the newest painting as an experiment that helps me to be happier, not to overload myself with problems" (Nura,1996, Bujku), expresses the artist.

Talking about the authenticity Gjelosh's art, Jain Prein says:

His paintings are full of ideas, vivid and fresh; they spontaneously affect, but they are not spontaneously constructed. They are constructed on a solid basis in composition and texture, placed safely, knit correctly. This weave carries the special variety of colors in the paintings of Gjokaj.

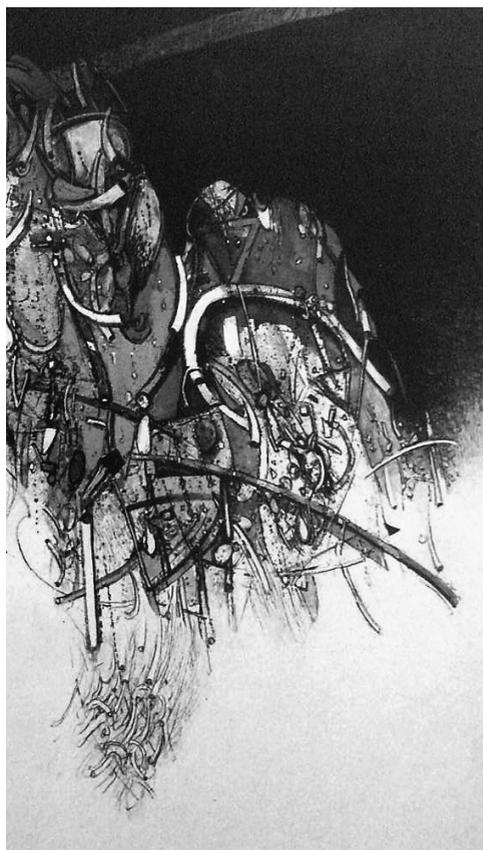
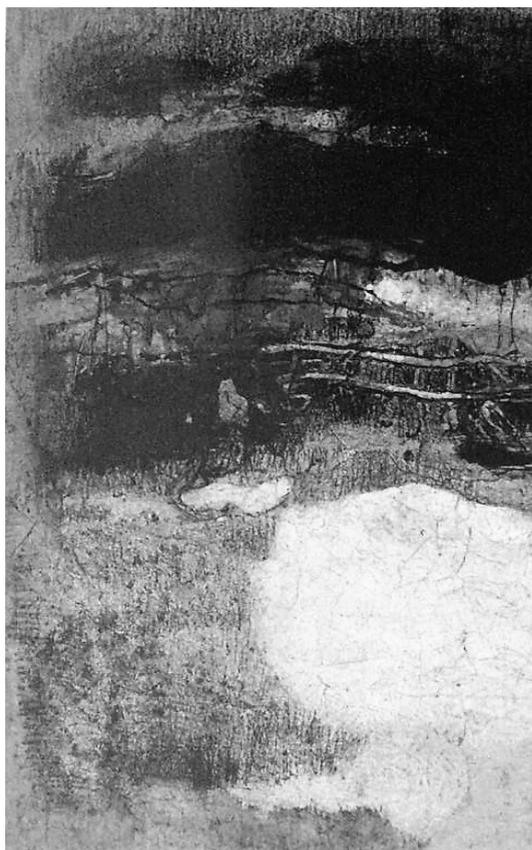
Prein describes Gjelosh's works as perfect and high-quality painting, considering that this enables him to fully master his profession, as well as professionalism, which does not exclude pleasure in the experiment but also the readiness for change (Prein, 2011,35).

Even in Germany he was ranked as an artist with extraordinary creative values. From there, he has hosted dozens of exhibitions all over the world. In different cities of Germany, Holland, and later returning to Italy, Kosovo, Albania, Croatia, Montenegro. Gjokaj was very active in collective exhibitions around the world. His art was praised with many prestigious awards and gratitude around the world. Gjelosh Gjokaj passed away in September 2016 in Bayern, Germany.

Conclusions

Being aware of the unique values of the Gjeshian art (based on over 3000 drawings, graphics and paintings left by him - which over the years have been exposed in almost all continents of the world as well as hundreds of critical, publishing, essayistic, and monographic interviews, by critics, art historians and scholars from all over the world who celebrated the art of Gjesh), without hesitation, we conclude that the name of this artistic phenomenon who immortalized his name and the name of the whole nation in the field of world figurative creativity, made honor to the homeland. Therefore, given the wide range of Gjesh's precious treasures, I am ending the present analytical work with the esteem of the deceased, Prof. Dr. Basri Qapriqi, who for Gjesh individuality creativity rightly stated: "In Albanian culture, this creator has the role of a great emancipator of art and of essential modernity through a pure culture. In the European culture, the talented painter has managed to bring in something from the soul and from our identity (Qapriqi, 2011,64).

Of course, the painter of artistic highs, throughout his life ran after the contemporary. In this context, we quote Gjokaj who always said: "I wish my art not to be decadent, but to be contemporary and to go along with time. I am inclined for my work to be in contemporary waters" (Gashi , 1993, Bujku)





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